

IMPROVED ROTISSERIE COOKER

5 CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION(S)

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/662,308 filed September 15, 2000 which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/436,614 filed November 9, 1999 (now U.S. Patent No. 6,173,645); which is a
10 continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/217,944 filed December 21, 1998 (now U.S. Patent No. 6,170,390).

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A rotisserie is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "an
15 appliance fitted with a spit on which food is rotated before or over a source of heat".

Rotisserie cooking, particularly on traditional horizontal spits, is considered to be among the healthiest ways of preparing foods. Unlike other cooking methods, unhealthy grease and oil
20 are allowed to drip off all sides of the food while it is being cooked. Other cooking methods allow grease and oil to settle into the top of the foods.

Rotisserie cooking is also among the most tasty methods of cooking. Contrasted with other cooking methods, moisture while
25 cooking doesn't settle to the bottom of the food, allowing the top to dry out. Taste is enhanced too because foods, and particularly meats, self-baste during the rotisserie cooking process. This self basting both seals in flavor and moisture, and simultaneously adds flavors to the outside of the food being
30 cooked.

Rotisserie cooking is also among the easiest methods of cooking. Rotisserie foods require little or no seasonings to add flavor for reasons just mentioned. And, unlike many other
35 methods of cooking, rotisserie cooking requires no, or virtually no, attention during the actual cooking process.

Among the most popular rotisseries in today's U.S. marketplace are those fitted to outdoor grills. Generally these
5 have a gear reduced electric motor powering a single rod horizontal spit over a charcoal or gas fired heat source, with either an open-air or enclosed oven design.

These units have their shortcomings, particularly during inclement weather, or when it is very hot or very cold, or when
10 flies, ants or yellow jackets are around, or when its windy, etc.

Models among these units which have enclosed ovens in which rotisserie cooking is performed, usually have no internal light and no window or only a small window to view the food while its being cooked. Such construction makes it difficult to check
15 cooking progress.

And opening the doors on these enclosed oven units generally lets out the hot cooking air which in turn slows cooking and makes gaging cooking times even more difficult.

And cooking results can be unpredictable on these units, particularly on charcoal fired models due to variances in the
20 heat source and outside air.

The exteriors of these units generally get very hot and thus present safety considerations which may require warning labels and extra caution on the part of the users.

25 Charcoal grills have additional inconveniences of having to start and maintain their hot coals.

Starting charcoal fires or using bottled or other forms of gas may also present safety hazards.

30 And hot grease dripping into glowing charcoal, gas flames or onto hot electric coils may flare up.

In addition, the single rod spits used on most of these rotisseries may be difficult to use and may not do an adequate job of supporting the food being cooked.

35 Another popular rotisserie type in the U.S. market is the enclosed countertop rotisserie having a vertically rotating spit.

These typically have limited capacity, such as being able to cook only a chicken weighing five pounds or less. Such capacity may be unsuitable for families or for use at parties.

Also, many of these units have small door openings and hot oven walls which make it difficult to insert and remove food.

And usually when the door is opened it swings to one side where it is still in the way of loading or unloading foods, especially when the door is hot.

And because these units rotate foods about a vertical axis, the top half of the food usually becomes dry even when the chef takes the inconvenient trouble to regularly baste.

And there are usually no provisions for putting smaller foods closer to the heat source where they might cook faster.

Typically these units have very hot exteriors which may present safety hazards requiring warning labels and extra user care.

Another rotisserie type becoming popular in the U.S. is the countertop toaster oven with horizontal rotisserie spit.

These typically have capacity limitations similar to those found on countertop rotisseries with vertical spits. They combine these limitations with the difficulty of use of outdoor rotisseries with their inadequate, awkward and limited use single rod spits.

Many of these countertop toaster ovens also present fire safety and smoke hazards from heat rods which are directly next to grease drip pans.

Most of these units have tight door openings and small oven cavities which make it difficult to insert and remove foods, particularly when the units are hot.

And many of these units have thermostatically controlled heating elements which cycle on and off and thus lengthen rotisserie cooking time. Rotisseries are most efficient when they have a constant radiant heat source. A constant source of

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heat, however, requires a method of efficiently removing heat from the cooking cavity which these units typically don't possess. Without efficiently removing heat, rotisserie oven interiors may overheat.

These units also typically have small door windows and little or no interior lighting which makes it difficult to view cooking progress.

10 And their spits are very difficult to maneuver into place and pull out of the oven, both due to the small oven cavities and because of poor mounting design. This is particularly true when the oven is hot.

15 In addition, when the doors open on these units, they generally swing down or swing to one side where they are in the way of loading and unloading food, particularly when the doors are hot.

And their doors are generally complicated in construction, typically having a small piece of glass framed with several pieces of metal, the entire assembly which is then permanently hinged to the cooking cavity.

These units too generally have no means to bring smaller foods closer to the heat source where they might cook faster.

25 Additionally, most rotisseries on the market today have several shortcomings in common.

They are usually limited as to what they can cook. Small foods or foods that can't be skewered may not be mountable for cooking. Even where baskets that fit on the spits are available, they are difficult to use and generally do a poor job of holding some types of food.

30 Next, cleanup is very difficult on most units. This is because few components can be removed for cleaning, and areas which require a lot of cleaning may be difficult to access, as an example, behind the heating elements.

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Most rotisseries can only rotisserie cook. They can't steam or heat other foods simultaneously while rotisserie cooking.
5 This is important because most people like vegetables or other side dishes to accompany their rotisserie cooked foods.

Most rotisseries occupy a large amount of space. This is particularly detrimental for indoor units where kitchen space may be at a premium.

10 And few current rotisseries adequately display the food being cooked which, with rotisserie cooking, can be a taste tempting show in itself.

Whereas the devices disclosed in the parent patent have been found to very capably rotisserie cook foods, several improvements
15 have been found which enhance versatility and functionality.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the present inventions showing phantom lines for various glass
20 door positions.

FIG. 2 is a section view of the preferred embodiment shown in FIG. 1 as indicated in FIG. 8.

FIG. 3 is a broken out perspective view of the front lower right corner of the preferred embodiment shown in FIG. 1 showing
25 in phantom lines how the glass door is mounted.

FIG. 4 is a broken out perspective view of the front lower left corner of the preferred embodiment shown in FIG. 1 showing in phantom lines how the glass door is mounted.

FIG. 5 is an enlarged section of FIG. 1 showing details of
30 the timer, control switch, heater indication light and the vents in the side wall.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the section shown in FIG. 2.

FIG. 7 is the same perspective view shown in FIG. 6 but with the spit plate removed and an alternative fan activated heat
35 removal and cabinet cooling system installed.

FIG. 8 is a section taken through the alternative fan activated preferred embodiment shown in FIG. 7 as indicated in FIG. 7.

FIG. 9 is a detailed perspective view of the light used to illuminate the cooking interior of the preferred embodiments shown in FIGs. 1 through 6 with the translucent red lens shown in dotted lines.

FIG. 10 is an enlarged detail of FIG. 1 showing in greater detail the upper left corner of the preferred embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of a preferred spit assembly including a spit support platform.

FIG. 12 is a sectioned perspective view taken from below of the lid used on the warming/steaming tray unit showing ribbing used to prevent uncontrolled dripping of condensed liquids.

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the spit assembly shown in FIG. 11 mounting a rotary cooking container.

FIG. 13A is a perspective view of an alternative rotary cooking container to the one shown in FIG. 13 but which does not require a separate spit assembly in order to operate.

FIG. 14 is a broken perspective section of a kabob rod showing with phantom lines how it mounts into the spit plate.

FIG. 15 is a plan side view of the spit plate and kabob rod shown in FIG. 14 showing how the kabob rod is turned by the drive gear when the spit plate rotates.

FIG. 16 is a perspective view of a food cooking basket showing in phantom lines how the lid for the basket is mounted.

FIG. 17 is a perspective view of the food cooking basket shown in FIG. 16 with food contained within the basket and the basket mounted on the spit assembly.

FIG. 18 is a perspective view of an alternative spit support platform.

FIG. 19 shows the alternative spit support platform shown in FIG. 18 being used to support spit mounted food including use of gloves specifically designed for use in rotisseries.

FIG. 20 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the present inventions.

FIG. 21 is a side view section taken through FIG. 20 as indicated in FIG. 20.

FIG. 22 is a side view of the control box of the preferred embodiment.

FIG. 23 is a perspective view of the second spit plate.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A preferred embodiment utilizing the present inventions comprises a metal enclosure 20 including an essentially horizontal metal floor 22 and metal roof 24, a generally vertical metal back 26, and two essentially vertical side walls including a double paneled right side wall 28 and a double paneled left side wall 30, and an inclined glass front door 32. A curved metal section 34 containing louver vents 238 joins the generally vertical metal back 26 to the essentially horizontal metal roof 24.

Two horizontal front-to-back running rod-like side rails 38 and 40, one located below the double paneled right side wall 28 and one disposed below the double paneled left side wall 30, support the metal enclosure 20 and raise it off a countertop 42 or flat surface on which it might rest. Four rubber feet 44, 46 and 48 located on the bottom 52 of the side rails 38 and 40 keep the rails 38 and 40 from scratching countertops 42 and help prevent the embodiment from skidding.

The side rails 38 and 40 have lifting handles 54 and 56 projecting from their sides, one 54 projecting rightward from the right side rail 38, and one 56 projecting leftward from the left

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side rail 40. These lifting handles 54 and 56 allow the embodiment to be lifted and carried.

5 The side rails 38 and 40 also incorporate two cord winding projections 58 60 extending rearward, one 58 from the back of the right side rail 38 and one 60 from the back of the left side rail 40. These cord winding projections 58 and 60 serve to wrap the cord for shortening its length, or for storing the cord while
10 carrying the embodiment or during storage, or for other reasons. The cord winding projections 58 and 60 also keep the back 26 of the embodiment from directly contacting a vertical back wall.

The glass front door 32 is essentially a single flat panel of glass 64 with a round steel axle rod 66 held along its lower
15 edge 68 by a "U" shaped channel 70 which is silicone glued to both the lower edge 68 of the panel of glass 64 and the axle rod. This axle rod extends outward 72 and 74 from both lower corners 76 and 78 of the panel of glass 64.

The rails 38 and 40 provide tracks 81 and 83 which engage
20 and support the two ends 80 and 82 of the round steel axle rod 66 which extend horizontally from each lower corner of the lower edge 68 of the glass front door 32, and this engagement with these tracks 81 and 83 controls movement of the glass front door 32 to pivot downward 84 from the door's 32 closed position 85
25 and to slide under 87 the metal enclosure 20.

In the upper right corner 86 of the panel of glass 64 and the upper left corner 88, there are two handles 90 and 92, one for each corner 86 and 88, which have rod-like grips 94 and 96 which extend horizontally outward 72 and 74 in opposite
30 directions. By making the grips extend horizontally instead of vertically, the overall height of the embodiment is minimized. This may be particularly advantageous in placing the embodiment below over counter cabinets or other overhead objects. The handle geometry is such that either handle 90 and 92 or both
35 handles 90 and 92 may be easily used to grip and open or close

the glass door 32, or slide it 32 under 87 the metal enclosure 20 or hold the door for other reasons such as removal.

5 The inclined glass door 32 may be held closed 85 by gravity alone, requiring no other latching mechanism. Thus, when compared to cooking enclosures having latches, this preferred embodiment door construction generally: reduces required assembly parts, simplifies manufacturing, makes manufacturing tolerances
10 wider, and makes user operation easier and more reliable.

When compared to a vertical glass door, the inclined glass door 32 also typically permits more ambient light to enter the cooking cavity and allows viewing of food being cooked from a broader range of vertical angles, thus making viewing of the food
15 being cooked easier and more convenient. This in turn makes it easier to determine cooking progress and turns cooking of rotisserie food into an entertaining and taste tantalizing show.

A light 98 mounted between the panels 99 and 101 of the double paneled right side wall 28 introduces additional light
20 into the cooking cavity 104 and further adds to the food viewing advantages just stated. This light 98 has a frosted translucent glass cover 100 which is in a contiguous plane with the interior wall 101 of the double paneled right side wall 28. This cover 100 separates the light bulb 98 from the cooking cavity 104. The
25 light bulb 98 has a shiny metal reflector 106 behind it which backs onto the outside wall 99 of the double paneled right side wall 28. The light 98 is wired to come on any time the embodiment's heat coil 110 is on.

A translucent red colored lens 112 penetrates the reflector
30 106 located behind the light bulb 98 and penetrates the outside panel 99 of the double paneled right side wall 28. Light shines through this red colored lens from the light 98 whenever the light bulb 98 and thus the heat coil 110 is on. This red colored lens 112 is visible on the outside of the right side wall 99 and
35 gives a clear visible indication of when the heat coil 110 is

operating. Using a single light 98 to both illuminate the interior of the cooking cavity 104, as well as give indication on the outside of the embodiment of when the heat coil 110 is operating, cuts down on required parts, simplifies embodiment construction, and increases embodiment reliability. Such a operation warning light may also meet the requirements for an "on" indicator as set by safety regulatory bodies such as Underwriters Laboratories. The lens color may also be changed, as an example to green, to match foreign safety standards such as those established by TUV in Germany.

The glass door 32 is silk printed 114 and 118 with trademark, decoration and safety markings. Such markings 114 may be printed in translucent inks which may be back lit by illumination from the light 98 mounted into the double paneled right side wall 28. Such glowing back lit markings 114 may be thus made to be much more visible and dramatic, especially in dark rooms, than similar common unlit markings.

Markings 114 on the panel of glass 64 may be placed to block glare from light 98 mounted into the double paneled right side wall 28 from shining into viewer's eyes thus making the embodiment more pleasant to look at due to less emitted light glare.

Markings 118 on the door 32 may match the color of the enclosure door 32 frame 116 which backs portions of the glass door 32 when the door 32 is closed 85. Such markings 118 when viewed against the background of the like colored enclosure frame 116 when the door 32 is closed 85, may be virtually invisible. When the glass door 32 is lowered 84, however, the markings 118 may become very visible. Thus a warning marking such as "Caution - Hot Surface" 118 may be printed to appear mirror imaged and upside down over when it is virtually invisible while the door 32 is closed 85 and the marking 118 is displayed against the like colored frame 116 background. When the door 32 is lowered 84 and

opened 134 and 87, however, the marking 118 may become clearly visible and appear in proper orientation, that is right side up and not mirror imaged, reading correctly "Caution - Hot Surface".

Any inclination past vertical may be used for the glass front door 32, but an angle between five and twenty-five degrees has been found to be most advantageous for producing satisfactory door latching and food viewing, as well as for conserving valuable countertop space. Too flat a glass angle stretches out the bottom of the enclosure and consumes an unacceptable amount of countertop space. Too steep a glass angle won't allow proper door latching and provides a poor view of foods being cooked. Inclining the front of the enclosure increases the enclosure's footprint on a countertop and thus increases its stability and decreases any tendency to tip over or be accidentally moved.

The preferred embodiment may be constructed at any scale. However, two sizes have been found to be particularly advantageous. For large families, or for parties and entertaining, an enclosure with cooking cavity 104 interior dimensions between eleven and thirteen inches wide side to side, ten to twelve inches from the cooking cavity ceiling 142 to the top of the drip pan 120, as explained later herein, and ten to twelve inches deep from the inside of the glass door 32 to the front of the heating rods 110, as explained later, as measured horizontally midway between the ceiling 142 and the top of the drip pan 120. When constructed at this scale, the embodiment can cook a fifteen pound turkey, or two six pound chickens. Fifteen pound turkeys are considered among the largest turkeys commonly sold around Thanksgiving and Christmas. And six pound chickens are among the largest commonly sold popular chickens sold in US supermarkets. Thus such a size meets the needs of most large families or people who entertain.

A second advantageous size meets the needs of smaller families, people who live alone, or people with very small

kitchens. For these markets, a cooking cavity 104 with interior dimensions between nine and eleven inches wide, seven to nine inches from the cooking cavity ceiling to the top of the drip pan, and seven to nine inches deep from the inside of the glass door 32 to the front of the heating rods is particularly advantageous. When constructed at this scale, the embodiment can cook a six pound chicken, or two three pound chickens. Three pound chickens are among the smallest commonly sold chickens. This size thus meets the needs of most smaller families or people who live alone.

The inclined glass front door 32 may rotate downward 84 and following such rotation to an essentially horizontal position 85, slide under 87 the metal enclosure 20 with glass front door's 32 axles 80 and 82 engaging into the tracks 81 and 83 in the two front-to-back side rails 38 and 40. In this slid-under position 87, the top 126 of the glass door 32 is held off the countertop 42 by flat horizontal ribs 91 93 in the side rails 38 and 40. Also in the slid-under position 87, the glass door 32 is out of the way of foods being loaded into or removed from the cooking cavity 104. This is particularly advantageous when the door 32 is hot and user contact with it might cause burns.

Alternatively, the enclosure 20 may be placed on the edge 30 of a countertop 42 and the glass door 32 may be rotated below the countertop 42 level 132 where it will also be out of the way of food loading and unloading.

As a third alternative, the glass door 32 may be opened 134 onto a countertop by being rotated down 84 from its closed position 85 to the countertop.

The glass front door 32 is also removable for cleaning, food loading, or other purposes.

As shown in FIGs. 3 and 4, this removal is accomplished by moving the door's 32 left axle 82 out of engagement with the track 83 in the left side rail 40 by sliding the axle 82 through

a slot 138 located in the front of the left side rail 40. After this, the right axle 80 is pulled out of engagement with the track 81 in the right side rail 38 by moving the glass door 32 and the attached right axle 80 to the left 140, away from the right rail 38. Reinstalling the glass door 32 is done by reversing the above procedure.

Several advantages come from using what is essentially a single panel of glass 64 for the front door 32. First, unlike most other framed glass constructions, the door 32 may be washed in a dishwasher, or sink, or immersed in liquid.

Second, when compared to doors which have framed glass, construction is generally: simpler, has fewer parts, is less expensive, and is lighter in weight for comparable transparent viewing area. Appearance is also typically cleaner. And the viewing area is unsurpassed compared to most other constructions.

On top 142 of the metal enclosure 20 may rest a warming/steaming tray unit 144 comprising a lower heating pan 146, an intermediate steaming tray 148 with holes 149 in its floor which rests down into the lower heating pan 146, and a warming tray lid 150 which caps and encloses both the lower heating pan 146 and the intermediate steaming tray 148.

This unit is supported by four frustum conical feet 152 projecting from near each of the four corners of the bottom of the lower heating pan 146, each of the feet 152 which rests into its own two level inverted wedding cake shaped support indentation 154 located near each of the corners of the roof 24 of the metal enclosure 20. Each foot 152 may rest in the lower most level of each such indentation 154 allowing direct contact between the roof 24 of the metal enclosure 20 and the floor 156 of the lower heating pan 146; or each foot 152 may rest at the next level up of each indentation 154 providing an air space 158 between the roof 24 of the metal enclosure 20 and the floor of the lower heating pan 146, thus lowering the temperature of the floor 156 of the

lower heating pan 146 and the temperature inside the warming/steaming tray unit 144. Such temperature control may be used in warming, cooking or steaming foods or in any combination of these functions or other functions - i.e. steaming vegetables and then keeping them warm.

The warming/steaming tray unit 144 may be used to warm, cook or steam foods, either simultaneous with rotisserie cooking or independent of it. And it may perform these functions either with or without the intermediate steaming tray 148 in place, and either with or without the warming tray lid 150 in place.

Handles 160 on either side of the heating pan 146 make it easy to lift the entire warming/steaming tray unit 144, with or without the intermediate steaming tray 148, and with or without the warming tray lid 150 in place. As an extra measure of convenience, the placement of the warming/steaming tray feet 152 is symmetrical both front to back and side to side thus allowing the user to place it 144 on top of the metal enclosure 20 with a given heating pan handle 160 on the right side or on the left side of the metal enclosure 20.

Water may be placed in the lower heating pan 146 and the intermediate steaming tray 148 put in place to facilitate the steaming of vegetables or other foods.

When foods are being steamed or when moist foods are being heated in the warming/steaming tray unit 144, droplets of water generally condense on the warming tray lid 150. These droplets may present a safety hazard when the user lifts off the lid because the droplets may be hot and tend to run to the side of the lid 150 and drop onto the user when the lid is lifted and tilted. As shown in FIG. 12, to help prevent this from happening, the lid 150 has several concentric "V" shaped ribs 151 on the underside of its top surface. When the lid 150 is lifted and tilted, water droplets on this surface begin to run to the side of the lid 150. En route to the side of the lid 150, most

of the water droplets cross the concentric "V" shaped ribs 151 and drop safely back into the intermediate steaming tray 148 or lower heating pan 146, thus preventing burns which might occur if the "V" shaped ribs 151 were not present and the hot water droplets dripped onto the embodiment user.

The warming tray lid 150 may be constructed of any of many suitable materials. It would be advantageous for it 150 to be translucent or transparent so cooking or steaming progress as well as the food being cooked could be observed without removing the lid 150. Glass or plastics such as polypropylene, polycarbonate, or Ultem™ from GE Plastics might be suitable for use in constructing the lid 150 as examples.

15 The warming tray lid 150 has a handle 153 in the center of its outside top surface to help in its use. This handle 153 is textured to help prevent slippage.

Within the metal enclosure 20, resting on its floor 22, is a drip pan 120 which mounts inside it, and is covered by, a grate cover 162. The drip pan 120 collects grease, oil, and liquid which come from the food being rotisserie cooked.

The grate cover 162 is a metal cover perforated with slots 163 which reduces splashing, and smoke, and flares from liquids from the rotisserie cooked foods splashing and hitting heat coils 110 and other hot surfaces, and diminishes the risk fire from hot grease and oil inside which has dripped from rotisserie cooking food into the drip pan 120 becoming overheated and igniting.

The drip pan 120 and capping grate cover 162 may be pulled out 164 to facilitate their own cleaning, or the embodiment's interior cleaning, or for other purposes.

30 The grate cover 162 and underlying drip pan 120 both tend to get dirty during rotisserie cooking. In the preferred embodiment, both are covered on their upper sides with a nonstick coating similar to that used in nonstick fry pans. Such coating greatly reduces cleanup, particularly on the grate cover 162

which may get grease, oil and residue dripped on it while simultaneously being exposed to high heat from the heat coil 110 which bakes the drippings on.

As shown in FIG. 2, the drip pan 120 may be pulled out part way 166 to prevent grease and oil from dripping onto counter tops or the glass front door 32 when food is being prepared for cooking in the spit track rest position 168, as explained later, or when food is being removed from the metal enclosure 20 after cooking.

Adding to user convenience, the grate cover 162 and drip pan 120 are each square, thus allowing the user to place the grate cover 162 in the drip pan 120 with any given corner of the grate cover 162 resting in any corner of the drip pan 120, and allowing the drip pan 120 to be placed in the metal enclosure 20 with any of its four corners resting in any corner of the metal enclosure 20.

As shown in FIG. 11, the embodiment's spit assembly 170 comprises a first metal spit plate 172 and a second metal spit plate 174. The first metal spit plate 172 has two sharpened cylindrical spit rods 176 178 attached at right angles to it. This first metal spit plate 172 is circular in outline with gear teeth 180 on its periphery and eight evenly spaced essentially round kabob holes 182 penetrating it just inside of and adjacent to the gear teeth 180. These kabob holes 182 are for supporting kabob rods 184 as explained later.

The center of the first metal plate 172 is frustum conically indented away from the projecting attached spit rods with a stub axle 186 projecting from the back bottom center of the plate's 172 frustum conical indent.

The stub axle 186 has circular grooves 188 cut into its cylindrical periphery. These grooves 188 help to prevent squeaking from the stub axles rubbing against their support

tracks 198 and 200, described later, when the spit assembly 170 is rotating.

5 The second metal spit plate 174 is the mirror image of the first metal spit plate 172 except in place of the two attached spit rods 176 and 178 it has two short spit rod support tubes 192 attached. These tubes 192 receive, and hold by an overlapping friction fit, the sharpened ends of the two spit rods 176 and
10 178.

Foods are secured to the spit simply by running one or both of the two sharpened spit rods 176 and 178 through the food and then capping the rods by pushing the tubes 192 in the second spit plate 174 over the sharpened ends of the spit rods 176 and 178
15 projecting from the first spit plate 172. The food is then easily inserted into the embodiment as explained later.

The spit assembly 170 of the preferred embodiment has several advantages over other available spit assemblies. It is compact and efficient in the use of space both inside and outside
20 the cooking cavity 104. Because the spit assembly 170 is placed straight into the cooking cavity without angling or sliding into a drive socket, and because no drive forks or other space robbing mechanisms are required to hold even large and heavy pieces of food, almost the entire length of the spit rods 176 and 178,
25 which run almost the full width of the cooking cavity 104 from the interior left oven wall 103 to the interior right oven wall 101, may be used to cook food. Other available spit rods, because they must be angled into place and slid into a drive socket are far less efficient in cooking space utilization.

30 Also, with the spit rods 176 and 178 on the preferred embodiment there is no loss of space outside the cooking cavity 104 while foods are being loaded into or are being cooked in the cooking cavity 104. Other available spit rods have handles which project beyond their cooking enclosure and waste valuable counter
35 space.

5 The spit assembly 170 on the preferred embodiment, as explained earlier, with its dual spit rod 176 and 178 design, holds foods more firmly than other single spit rod designs. This advantage means that even heavy and large foods rotate solidly with the spit assembly 170 and don't become loose and flop or fall off the rods 176 and 178. On other spit rod designs, foods tend to shift while rotating and become loose and fall off the spit rods when this looseness bores a hole through the food being
10 cooked.

The spit assembly 170 on the preferred embodiment, as explained in more detail later herein, also integrates the mounting of self-rotating kabob rods into its design. Many other spit rod designs don't even plan for the mounting of non-rotating
15 kabob rods.

And the spit assembly 170 on the preferred embodiment, as also explained in more detail later herein, also allows for the easy and solid mounting of other cooking accessories such as cooking baskets 270. Other spit rods designs may make no such
20 provisions.

The spit assembly 170 on the preferred embodiment makes food mounting easy. The food is simply pushed onto the two relatively skinny and sharp spit rods 176 and 178, the second spit plate 174
25 slid into place, and the assembly, food and all, is placed directly into the cooking cavity 104. Other designs have thicker spit rods which are more difficult to shove through foods, and these designs may require hard to use accessories, such as mounting forks, to secure the foods from rotating independently
30 of the spit while cooking, and placing foods into their cooking enclosures is more difficult, as explained in the next paragraph.

The spit assembly 170 on the preferred embodiment is easy and intuitive to load into the cooking cavity 104. The assembly 170 is simply shoved directly into the cooking cavity without
35 angling or having to align its end with and slide it into a drive

socket. Other designs with drive sockets or other complicated drive means are far more difficult to use.

5 And foods are easy to unload from the preferred embodiment's spit assembly 170. The assembly 170 is simply slide straight out of the cooking cavity 104, the second spit plate 174 easily removed, and the foods slid off the two rods 176 and 178. Other spit rods are difficult to remove from their cooking enclosures,
10 some requiring the attachment of handles or lifting devices, and/or angling to uncouple drive mechanisms, and may require the additional steps of removal of accessories, such as food mounting forks.

The spit assembly 170 on the preferred embodiment may be
15 mounted closer to the cooking heat source 110 to speed cooking of smaller foods. Other spit rod designs don't offer this feature.

Cleaning of the spit rods 176 and 178 is enhanced by nonstick coating, similar to that used in nonstick fry pans,
20 covering their surfaces which contact food during cooking. The ends of the spit rods may be left uncoated to facilitate the easy insertion of the rods 176 and 178 into the spit rod support tubes 192.

To facilitate food loading onto the spit assembly, a spit
25 support base 194 is supplied with the preferred embodiment. This spit support base 194 can hold the first spit plate 172 with its spit rods 176 and 178 projecting directly upward. In this position, foods can be easily loaded onto the spit rods 176 and 178 by lowering the foods onto the pointed ends of the rods 176
30 and 178.

In addition, the spit support base 194 can be used to help in serving. In this capacity, the support base 194, possibly after being placed on top of a plate, can hold foods skewered on the
35 vertically disposed spit rods 176 and 178 while the food is being

removed from the spit rods 176 and 178 or while the food is being carved.

5 A variant 196 of the spit support base 194 shown in FIGs. 18 and 19 expands the diameter of the support base 194 and allows the expanded diameter support base 196 to be used for all of the original 194 support base's functions plus it may be used as a serving plate for foods either not skewered or positioned on
10 vertically supported spit rods 176 and 178. In addition, this larger variant 196 may eliminate any need for a plate when the support base is used as a serving platform holding the spit assembly 170 with its rods 176 and 178 disposed vertically.

As shown in FIG. 19, this spit support base variant 196 may
15 also be used to help load and unload foods into and from the embodiment. Here, the support base 196 is placed under the food, and the support base 196 along with the food which it supports is lifted and moved to load the food into, or remove the food from, the enclosure 20.

20 Similarly, any dish shaped device might be used to help load and unload food to and from the enclosure 20. Such a shape is enhanced for this use if its perimeter is raised in a manner similar to that found on a soup bowl. Such a raised perimeter helps better support the foods being inserted into or removed
25 from the enclosure 20 and more reliably holds liquids which may drip from such foods.

Either the original 194 or the variant 196 spit support base may be used to keep the spit assembly 170 from rolling on a countertop. Here, one of the spit plates 172 and 174 is placed
30 into either an upright or inverted spit support base 194 and 196 resting on the countertop which thus prevents the spit assembly 170 from rolling by providing a stable indentation, i.e. either the top face or bottom face of the support base 194 and 196 resting flat on the counter, in which one of the round spit plates 172
35 and 174 may rest.

Because there are two spit rods 176 and 178, foods may be penetrated by both rods 176 and 178 and thus the foods may be securely held and prevented from spinning independent of the spit assembly's 170 rotation, or prevented from dropping off the spit assembly 170. This compares to conventional single rod spit designs which tear holes in food because all the food's weight is supported on a single rod. Foods supported on such single rods may break loose and fail to turn as the spit turns because of inadequate torsional support engagement between the spit and the food. Foods may also fall off of single spit rods due to inadequate weight distribution and support, and because food movement not synchronized with the spit tends to tear holes in the foods which results in the foods tearing loose of the spit.

In addition, many single spit rods use clamped-on support forks positioned at each end of the spit rod supported food to compensate for food tearing and spinning independently of the spit assembly. These support forks frequently cause further problems by being difficult and inconvenient to install and remove as well as by shortening the length of food that can fit on the spit rods because of the space the support forks consume.

Once the spit 170 is fully assembled with the food skewered on the spit rods 176 and 178 and the tubes 192 projecting from the second metal spit plate slid over and capping the pointed ends of the spit rods 176 and 178 orthogonally projecting from the first metal spit plate 172, the spit assembly 170 is ready to be loaded into the embodiment enclosure 20.

The double paneled right side wall 28 and the double paneled left side wall 30 each contain an indented spit support track 198 200 on their interior panels 101 and 103. In the preferred embodiment, the spit support track 200 on the interior panel 103 of the left double paneled side wall 30 is a mirror image of the spit support track 198 on the interior panel 101 of the right double paneled side wall 28.

These two spit support tracks 198 and 200 engage the stub axles 186 on the spit plates 172 and 174 when the spit assembly 170 is slid into the enclosure 20. The tracks 198 and 200 allow the spit assembly 170, including any spit accessories or any food thereon, to slide in and out of the enclosure 20. In addition, each track 198 and 200 has three axle positioning indents 168, 122 and 202 which can support and hold the stub axles 186, and thus the spit assembly 170. in specific track 198 200 locations.

The first 168 of these axle positioning indents 168, 122 and 202 is located on each track 198 and 200 adjacent to the door 32 opening. This indent 168 is referred to as the rest position and has several functions. First, when loading or unloading food from the embodiment, it may be first rested in this position 168 where a better grip may be obtained on the food or where it simply may be rested. It also serves as the first location to catch the spit assembly 170 as it is being loaded into the embodiment, and the last location to catch the spit assembly 170 before it leaves.

It also serves as an area to prepare food. As an example, in the rest position 168 foods can be centered on the spit rod, or ties to secure the wings and legs on a chicken might be readjusted, or barbecue sauce can be brushed on a chicken or baby back ribs, or seasonings applied to other foods.

When the rest position 168 is being used for food preparation, it may be advantageous to pull the drip pan 120 and attached grate cover 162 to their part way out position 166, as explained earlier, to keep foods and preparations from dripping or dropping onto the countertop or glass door.

The rest position 168 on each spit support track 198 and 200 is backed by an upwardly inclined track portion 204. This inclined track 204, combined with the large open front throat of the track and rest position 168, makes it easy to catch the spit assembly 170 and hold it in the rest position 168 when it is

inserted into the enclosure 20, and it makes it obvious that the spit assembly 170 has been caught in the rest position 168 when it is being removed from the enclosure 20.

The tracks' 198 and 200 lowered front portions allows foods to duck under the enclosure's roof 24 front overhang 206, thus allowing larger foods to be loaded into the enclosure 20. The roof 24 front overhang 206 is necessary to give strength to the front of the roof 24, and without lowering the front of the track, the size of the foods which might be loaded into the enclosure 20 could be reduced and be smaller than the capacity of the enclosure 20 itself.

When the spit assembly 170 is being loaded into the enclosure 20, the assembly 170 first passes the rest position 168, then the inclined track portion 204, and next it comes to the low heat position 122 where its stub axles 186 can be engaged by gravity into a detent 168, 122 and 202 and rotate. In the low heat position 122 the gear teeth 180 on the perimeter of the spit plate closest to the right side inner side wall 101 engage a motor driven drive gear 208 which penetrates into the enclosure through the right side inner side wall 101. The spit assembly 170 and any spit accessories or food thereon, may be rotated by this motor driven drive gear 208 in front of the embodiment's rear heating element 110, which is described later herein.

A quick and easy method of tying up loose parts of foods to be rotisserie cooked has been found using the spit support track 200, timer 222 and control switch 224. As an example wings and legs on chickens, ducks and turkeys can be easily secured using this method. First, the end of a length of string is secured to a wing, leg or other part of the fowl using a simple wrap or a slip knot as examples. In the alternative, the end of the string might be indirectly secured to the fowl by securing the string to the spit assembly 170. This might be done while the fowl is supported on the spit assembly 170 in the spit support track 200

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rest position 168 or while the fowl is outside the embodiment. Next, the spit assemble is moved back to either the low heat 122
5 or high heat 202 spit support track 200 position. The control switch 224 is then turned to the "no heat rotation" 252 position and the timer turned on. As the fowl rotates, the string automatically wraps around the fowl's loose parts thus securing them. Once secured, the timer is turned off, the string is cut,
10 and its end tied or wrapped or otherwise secured to the fowl on a wing, leg or other part. In the alternative again, the cut end of the string might be indirectly secured to the fowl by securing the end to the spit assembly 170.

The direction of spit assembly 170 rotation is important in
15 producing satisfactory cooking results. The embodiment's heating element 110 is located half way up, and directly adjacent to, the back 26 wall of the enclosure 20. The drive gear 208 rotates the spit assembly 170 so food rotate 175 from the top of the enclosure 20 down to directly in front of the heating element 110
20 and then down to the bottom of the enclosure where the food rotates 175 back to the top of the enclosure 20 while the food faces away from the heating element 110. Reversing this rotation 175 has been found to result in smoke, small flare-ups and less tasty food.

25 The speed of spit assembly rotation has also been found to be important in producing rotisserie cooked foods with generally superior taste and texture. The preferred embodiment has a spit assembly 170 rotation speed of between 3.5 and 5 rpm. This is typically faster than most home rotisseries operate

30 The low heat position 122 may support large foods up to the capacity of the enclosure 20. However, it may also support foods of any size including smaller sized foods. In some cases the low heat position 122 may be desirable to cook smaller foods slower as an example.

35

Rotisserie cooking in the preferred embodiment differs in several ways from conventional oven cooking. First, in conventional oven cooking the food remains stationary and is cooked by hot air. In the preferred embodiment, food is rotated about a horizontal axis and is cooked by a combination of both radiant energy coming directly from the heat coil 110 and air heated by the heat coil 110. Radiant energy is generally more efficient than hot air in conveying cooking energy to food and thus typically gets foods hotter quicker.

However without food rotation, radiant energy tends to dry out and burn foods as is the case in most conventional oven broilers. Also, without food rotation, radiant energy tends to cook grease and oil into foods, and particularly into meats.

Rotisserie cooking in the preferred embodiment is generally quicker than conventional oven cooking. This is partly due to the efficiency of radiant energy heating and also due to food movement which helps break the air boundary layer around foods being cooked and thus speeds hot air heat transfer to foods in a similar manner to fan driven home convection bake ovens.

Cooking speed is also increased because foods are alternately super heated on their surfaces as they pass directly in front of the heating coil and then the heat is allowed to soak into the foods as they rotate away from the heating coil.

Natural expansion and contraction as foods heat and cool during rotation also helps speed the cooking process and lower cooking times.

Directly behind and above the low heat track position 122, is the high heat track position 202. Again, the stub axles 186 of the spit assembly 170 may be pushed back, raised and rested into this position. In this position the gear teeth 180 in the perimeter of the spit plate closest to the right side inner side wall 101 may engage the drive gear 208 and the spit assembly 170 may be thus power rotated. Smaller foods may be rotated closer

to the heating element 110 in the high heat track position 202 which may greatly reduce such smaller foods' cooking times.

5 Inserting the spit assembly 170 into the preferred embodiment requires only resting it on the left and right spit support tracks 200 and 198 and lifting and pushing it back into the enclosure 20 to the desired use position 168, 122 and 202, be it the rest position 168, the low heat position 122 or the
10 high heat position 202.

Removing the spit assembly 170 from the high heat track position 202, the low heat track position 122, or from the rest track position 168, requires only lifting and pulling the spit assembly 170 toward the front of the enclosure 20.

15 This easy insertion of the spit assembly 170 into, and simple removal of the spit assembly 170 from, the embodiment enclosure 20 is in marked contrast to most other rotisseries which typically require angling the spit rod assembly into its cooking position and carefully fitting one of the spit assembly's
20 ends into a drive socket.

Use of the relatively large diameter spit plates 172 and 174 as the final reduction gear in the motor rotational speed reducing gear train driving the spit assembly 170 has several advantages when compared with typical rotisserie drives which use
25 a gear box terminated by a drive socket directly coupled to the spit rod.

The spit plate's 172 and 174 large outer diameter gear 180 greatly reduces the play and backlash in the motor speed reduction gear drive train caused when off-center weighted foods
30 are rotated. In this situation the motor pushes off-center foods uphill until the off-center weight swings over the top of center and then moves downhill constrained by the drag of the motor. The shift from the motor pulling the food uphill to the motor constraining the food's movement downhill causes a shock load on
35 all the gears in the gear reduction train, and particularly on

the final drive gears, as any free movement, or play, between the gears in the gear train shifts with the full power of the off-center weighted foods behind it.

Typical final drive gears found in rotisserie drive trains are one-tenth or less of the diameter of the spit plate's outer gear teeth 180 and thus generally are far less durable, have far more play, and put far more load on both the spit and attached food, and on the rest of the reduction drive gear train itself. This in turn may result in shorter motor and gear life, food disengaging from and falling off of the spit rod, and unacceptable levels of noise and vibration.

The speed reduction between the drive gear 208 and the gear teeth 180 on the spit plate 172 and 174 is ten-to-one in the preferred embodiment but may be greater or less depending on the desired diameter of the spit plate and the coarseness needed in the gear teeth. In the preferred embodiment, such a high gear reduction outside of the gear transmission 210 attached to the gear reduced motor 212 means that fewer and less durable, which may translate to less expensive, gears may be used inside the gear transmission 210 attached to the gear reduced motor 212.

And by eliminating the drive socket which is generally used to attach the spit assembly to the final drive gear of the motor speed reducing gear transmission, any play in the socket engagement with the spit assembly or any binding in inserting or removing the spit assembly into and from the drive socket are eliminated

Both the first 172 and the second spit plates 174 each have eight evenly spaced kabob holes 182 penetrating their structure just inside their perimeter gear teeth 180. These holes 182 are designed to hold the ends of self rotating kabob rods 184. Each kabob hole 182 is essentially circular hole passing through the spit plate 172 and 174 with four evenly spaced semicircular lobes 214 carved into its perimeter.

Engaging these kabob holes 182 are self-rotating kabob rods 184. Each kabob rod 184 has a pointed end 216, and an end with a drive cam 218 and retaining spring 220. The kabob rods 184 work by the spit assembly 170 first being put together with the spit rod holding tubes 192 on the second spit plate 174 being pushed over the pointed ends of the two spit rods 176 and 178 projecting from the first spit plate 172.

10 Each kabob rod 184 to be used is then loaded with food by skewering the food onto the kabob rod 184 using its pointed end 216. Any number of kabob rods 184 may be used at any one time, from one up to the spit assembly's 170 capacity of eight.

To insert a kabob rod 184 onto the spit assembly 170, the 15 pointed end 216 of the kabob rod 184 is inserted through a kabob hole 182 in the spit plate 172 and 174 which will be closest to the inner panel 103 of double paneled left wall 30. Then the rod 184 is backed into an opposing hole 182 in the other spit plate 172 and 174 where the retaining spring 220, as its widest 183 20 part passes through the kabob hole, snaps and retains the kabob rod 184 from side to side movement away from or toward either spit plate 172 and 174 similar to the way a clothing snap works. This insertion process is easy and intuitive and is repeated for each kabob rod 184 to be used.

25 Insertion of the kabob rods 184 onto the spit assembly 170 may be done while the spit assembly 170 is outside of the enclosure 20 or while it is placed in a track position inside the enclosure 20, such, as an example, as being placed in the rest position 168.

30 The spit assembly 170 with attached kabob rods 184 is then inserted into the low heat track position 122, and the embodiment turned on by setting the cooking time on the timer 222 and turning the control switch 224 to the "Normal Heat Rotation" position.

As shown in FIG. 15, each 360 degree rotation 175 of the spit assembly 170 causes each kabob rod 184 to be rotated 177 one-quarter turn by the kabob rod's 184 drive cam 218 being rotated by the spit plate 172 174 into the drive gear 208 which forces one of the kabob rod's cam 218 arms striking the drive gear 208 to move and consequently causes the one-quarter turn rotation of the kabob rod 184.

The four lobes 214 in each of the spit plate 172 and 174 kabob holes 182 help stop each kabob rod 184 at even one-quarter turn intervals, and also help prevent a kabob rod 184 from rotating in its kabob hole 182 when it is not being driven by the drive gear 208 pushing on the kabob rod cam 218.

This kabob rod 184 automatic rotation results in all sides of the kabob rod cooked food being cooked evenly, unlike in most rotisserie kabob cooking where one side of the kabob food gets cooked more than the opposite side.

The kabob rods 184 on the preferred embodiment are better than others commonly available for several reasons. First, they 184 may automatically rotate, as explained above, which cooks kabob foods more evenly on all sides than non-rotating rods.

Second, one, or up to the spit wheel's capacity of eight kabob rods, can be in use at any time. Some kabob rods require the entire transport wheel to be loaded with kabob rods in order to operate.

Third, the rods 184 can be inserted or removed while the rods 184 are inside the cooking cavity 104. Many kabob rods require a lot of space to be inserted or removed from their transport wheel, and thus they could not be inserted and removed from inside a confined cooking space.

Next, the rods 184 are very efficient in space utilization and allow foods to be placed along most of the rod's 184 entire length. Along with this, the rod's 184 means of attaching to their transport wheels 172 and 174 is compact and therefor allows

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more room for cooking foods with less wasted space for attachment to the transport wheels 172 and 174. Many kabob rods use a
5 substantial portion of their length for coupling which limits their cooking space.

And the kabob rods 184 intuitively snap into place which makes them easy to use. This also generally removes the need for user instructions. Many kabob rods have complicated coupling
10 mechanisms which are both difficult to use and require detailed user instructions.

The rods 184 offer the ability for each rod 184 to automatically rotate or remain stationary at the user's discretion and in any combination (i.e. 3 rotating and 2
15 remaining stationary all simultaneously) simply by the user facing the rod's cam 218 toward or away from the drive gear 208 side of the cooking cavity 104. This feature is not found on other kabob rod designs.

And when the rods 184 are stationary, bacon, slabs of baby
20 back ribs or other foods may be wrapped around and clipped to the rods in drum-like fashion for fast even cooking.

As most clearly shown in FIG. 8, directly adjacent to, and approximately half way up the back 26 of the enclosure 20 of the preferred embodiment, is a serpentine shaped electric heat coil
25 110. This coil 110 winds back and forth across the back 26 of the enclosure 20 creating four straight heat rods 226 terminated by three "U" turns 228 and two rods passing through the enclosure's right side interior wall. The coil is supported on its right and left ends by support brackets 230 and 232 which
30 slide over the "U" turns 228 in the coil and position it to allow for expansion and contraction as the coil heats and cools, while maintaining the coil's correct position.

This heat coil 110, unlike heating elements in conventional ovens which turn on and off under thermostatic control, may
35 remain constantly on during cooking. This minimizes cooking

times and simplifies embodiment construction when compared to rotisseries which cycle on and off while cooking. Alternatively
 5 the heat coil 110 may be thermostatically controlled and forgo these advantages.

Through the constantly on heat coil 110, the embodiment is continuously heating air inside the enclosure 20, and is constantly radiating cooking energy. By being constructed to
 10 have a heating element 110 which remains constantly on and thus having no thermostat, the preferred embodiment obviates the need for safety devices such as safety thermostats and thermal fuses designed to protect the device if a user set thermostat should fail. This further simplifies construction of the embodiment
 15 when compared to most conventional oven constructions.

Some rotisseries place their heating elements or sources of heat below the spit. This may create safety problems from grease fires and flare ups. When grease, oil and residue collected in drip receptacles below the spit become overheated from a heating
 20 source located below the spit, smoke and fires can result. When grease, oil or other residue drip or splash onto heating elements, other heat sources, or other hot surfaces, fire and smoke can also result. Heat sources located below the spit also tend to raise the overall height of the rotisserie which may be
 25 a problem when it is used in kitchens with cabinets located over their countertops.

Some enclosed rotisseries place their heating source above the spit assembly. These elements, due to their locations, and because both radiant and convection heat given off by the
 30 elements tends to rise, are generally less efficient than heat sources placed lower in the cooking enclosure 20. This high position also tends to raise the overall height of the rotisserie which may be a problem when they are used in kitchens with cabinets located over their countertops. This problem is
 35 compounded by top mounted heating sources superheating the top

of the cooking enclosure 20 which in turn may cause heat damage to over-counter cabinets. Such superheating may also create heat and fire safety hazards.

Both low and roof mounted heating elements, because they may have their heat sources located near the middle or front of the rotisserie, may create an increased potential for users burning their hands when inserting and removing foods from the rotisserie enclosure when compared to a back mounted heating element.

By the preferred embodiment placing its heating element in the back 26 of the enclosure 20, risk is minimized that a user will burn themselves on the element 110 or element heated hot surfaces.

By the preferred embodiment placing its heating element mid way between the floor 22 and ceiling 24 of the embodiment enclosure 20, problems of both low and high mounted heat sources are overcome. As an example, this mid way heating element 110 location helps minimize the overall height of the embodiment, and greatly reduces any chance of smoke and fires from the contents of the drip pan becoming overheated or from grease, oil or other residues splashing onto heat coil 110 or heat coil warmed hot surfaces.

When compared to roof mounted heat elements, this mid location also reduces the temperature of the roof 24 of the embodiment, thus reducing the risk of heat damage to over-counter cabinets and the risk of burning users on the roof 24

This mid location in the preferred embodiment is also generally more efficient in conveying cooking energy than heat coils mounted above the spit assembly 170.

This mid location, when compared to heat elements located above or below the spit which generally are closer to the front of the enclosure, also tends to reduce the temperature on the outside of the front door 32, including the front door 32 glass,

which in turn reduces the risk a user will burn themselves on these surfaces.

5 The mid heat element 110 location in general, when compared to heat element locations above or below the spit assembly, reduces all temperatures on the forward exterior of the enclosure 20 where users are most likely to come in contact and potentially burn themselves. This in general reduces user safety hazards 10 both directly from burning themselves on the enclosure 20 or from accidents, such as accidentally dropping hot food, after unintentional contact with such hot enclosure 20 surfaces.

Located directly behind the heating element 110, and held in place by the left 230 and right 232 heater element support 15 brackets, is a removable cleaning shield 234. During rotisserie cooking, grease, oil and residue may be splattered off food as the food becomes heated in front of the heating element 110. Thus the area behind and adjacent to the heating element 110 tends to get dirty. Heat from the heating element 110 bakes on 20 the grease, oil and residue and makes cleanup difficult.

The cleaning shield 234 may be coated with a nonstick ceramic coating similar to that used in many of today's nonstick fry pans. This coating is medium gray in color and thus tends not to show when it is dirty.

25 However, when it becomes dirty, the cleaning shield 234 is easy to clean simply by gripping the shield 234 by its bent-over top edge 236 and pulling it up and forward 235 and out of the enclosure 20. Once thus removed, the shield 234 may be washed in a sink or dishwasher. Reinserting the cleaning shield 234 is 30 accomplished by reversing the removal process.

By being behind and adjacent to the heating element 110, the cleaning shield 234 receives radiant heat from the element 110. When compared to a shiny surface cleaning shield placed behind the heating element 110, the medium gray ceramic coating on the

cleaning shield 234 has been found to cook foods as fast or even faster than their shiny counterparts.

5 Although definitive tests have not been performed to prove the theory, it appears there are two reasons for this unexpected cooking efficiency. First, the medium gray ceramic nonstick coated cleaning shield 234 gets hotter than a similar shiny cleaning shield. This in turn raises the interior air
10 temperature of the enclosure 20 which in turn reduces cooking times.

Second, radiant energy striking the medium gray ceramic nonstick coated cleaning shield is reradiated at a lower infrared frequency than radiant energy striking a shiny cleaning shield.
15 This lower frequency tends to absorb quicker and deeper into foods which in turn results in shorter cooking times.

These same cook time reducing features can be found with other cleaning shield coatings. As an example, self-cleaning oven interior coatings similar to those found in the DeLonge
20 Alfredo Toaster Oven which today is widely available in U.S. department stores such as Robinson-May and Macy's, show similar advantages and require even less cleanup than nonstick ceramic coatings.

The nonstick ceramic coating on the cleaning shield 234, by
25 not readily showing when it is dirty, reduces the amount of cleaning that the cleaning shield 234 requires. This same coating, when compared to other surfaces, makes cleaning the shield much easier. Cleaning ease is also greatly enhanced by the cleaning shield 234 being easy to remove from and reinsert
30 into the enclosure 20.

As mentioned earlier, the heating element 110 in the preferred embodiment remains constantly on during rotisserie cooking which creates hot air which must be safely vented from the enclosure's 20 interior.

Directly behind the heat shield 234, on the curved center wall section 34 connecting the back 26 of the enclosure 20 to the roof 24 of the enclosure 20, are upward facing vents 238. These vents 238 allow air heated by the constantly operating heating element to escape the enclosure's 20 interior. These louvered vents 238 are indented inward with their openings at the top of the indent.

This arrangement of upward facing louvers 238 reduces potential heat damage to overhead cabinets when compared to more conventional indented louvers with their openings at the bottom of the indent. This is because hot air must first rise above the louver 238 and then exit by dropping down into the louver 238 opening rather than simply rising directly through the louver opening.

Forcing the hot air to first rise and then drop, reduces its velocity and creates turbulence which breaks up potentially damaging concentrated streams of fast moving exiting hot air.

Placing the vents 238 on the curved wall section 34 connecting the back 26 of the enclosure 20 with the enclosure's roof 24, when compared to placing the vents on the back 26 or the roof 24 of the enclosure 20, helps hot air exit away from backing walls the embodiment might be placed against, or exit away from overhead cabinets the embodiment might be placed under. Exiting hot air also tends to follow along the curved wall section 34 breaking away slowly and this further disperses hot air concentration.

There are gaps 240, 242, 244 and 246 between the glass door 32 and the frame 116 it rests against on all four sides of the door 32. The gaps on the lower side of the glass door 32 generally allow cool air to enter the enclosure's 20 interior, and the gaps around the upper section of the glass door 32 generally allow hot air to exit from inside the enclosure 20.

This air movement helps control interior enclosure 20

temperatures which might otherwise rise to unacceptable levels due to the heat element 110 remaining constantly on during rotisserie cooking.

The gaps 240 and 242 between the door frame 116 and the glass door 32 are exceptionally wide on both the left 242 and right 240 sides of the glass door 32. Hot air exiting out these left 242 and right 240 side gaps is dispersed and broken up by these exceptionally wide gaps 240 and 242 being inclined with the glass door 32 which help form the side gaps 240 and 242. Such dispersion and breakup of the hot air rising from the inclined side gaps 240 and 242 helps prevent heat damage to overhead cabinets which the embodiment might be placed under.

The interior temperature of the enclosure 20 is controlled by the venting already described both on the curved wall 34 connecting the back 26 wall of the enclosure 20 with the roof 24 of the enclosure 20 and the venting from the gaps 240, 242, 244 and 246 surrounding the door. An equilibrium is reached involving the cooking energy supplied by heating element 110, a cooling affect from the cooler temperature of the food being cooked, the amount of venting, and the ambient air temperature of the room in which the embodiment is operating. In the final stages of food cooking the preferred embodiment is engineered to produce an air temperature measured near the center of the enclosure's 20 interior of around 250 to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Such a temperature, when compared to both warmer and cooler cooking temperatures, has been found to produce exceptionally satisfactory results in rotisserie cooked food taste and texture.

An alternate form of controlling cooking temperatures is shown in FIGs. 7 and 8. Here the shaft of the gear reduced motor 212 is extended through the case of the gear transmission 210 and a radial fan 258 is attached to the end of the motor's shaft. This fan 258 pulls through it both cool air 260 from outside of the enclosure 20 as well as hot air 262 from inside the enclosure

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20. The cool air 260 and hot air 262 are mixed and the combined warm air move into the space between the interior wall 101 and outside wall 99 of the double paneled right side wall 28. A long scoop shaped vent 264 adjacent to the right side of the glass door 32 directs warm air out 266 over the exterior of the glass door when the embodiment is on and cooking with the glass door 32 closed. This directed warm air 266 cools the exterior of the glass door to help lower its temperature and thus the chances of a user getting burned by touching its surface.

Other vents 268 at the top of the double paneled right side wall 28 direct 280 the warm air moved by the fan 258 out 280 over the metal roof 24 of the enclosure 20 thus cooling the roof 24 and lowering its temperature to reduce the risks of burns from users accidentally touching the roof 24 when it is hot. Air from these vents 268 is blocked when the warming/steaming tray unit 144 is placed on top 24 of the enclosure 20 thus increasing the heat on the metal roof 24 and allowing the warming/steaming tray unit 144 to function in its normal way. Other vents may be placed in other locations around the double paneled right side wall 28, such as example adjacent to the curved metal section 34 or back 26 of the enclosure, to help vent the interior of the enclosure 20 and reduce the chances of accidental burns from a user touching that section 34 and 26 by mistake.

The enclosure 20 is generally symmetrical side to side when viewed from the front. However there a few exceptions to this. First, there is a control/motor housing 248 mounted to the outside panel 99 of the double paneled right side wall 28. The control/motor housing 248 has a power cord 250 extending out its back and contains within it: a three hour mechanical timer 222, a control switch 224, and a gear reduced 210 motor 212 which powers the drive gear 208, referred to earlier, projecting through the interior panel 101 of the double paneled right side wall 28. The heat element 110, as described earlier, also

projects from the interior panel 101 of the double paneled right side wall 28 and is supported by brackets 230 and 232 attached to both the right interior side wall 101 and the left interior side wall 103. There too is a light 98 and light reflector 106 mounted between the interior 101 and exterior 99 panels of the double paneled right side wall 28 which lights the interior of the enclosure 20 through a translucent glass cover 100 disposed on the interior wall 101 of the double paneled right side wall 28. This light 98 has a red lens 112 which extends from the light 98 through the light reflector 106 and exterior right panel 99 to the outside of the double paneled right side wall 28.

The control/motor housing 248, as just described, is attached to the outer panel 99 of the double paneled right side wall 28. Instead of mounting the controls 222 and 224 on the front face of the embodiment as most conventional ovens do, the preferred embodiment mounts its controls 222 and 224 more than one-third the way back on its right side. It also mounts the control/motor housing 248 above the bottom of the embodiment, so that more than one-eighth of the outer panel of the double paneled right side wall 28 is left exposed under the control/motor cover 248 to allow items on the countertop 42 on which the embodiment might rest to move and reside under the control/motor housing 248.

Placing the controls 222 and 224 in a separate housing 248 and placing the housing 248 more than a third of the way back on the side and more than an eighth of the way up the side of the cooking enclosure 20 has been found to maximize valuable useable counter space while simultaneously not significantly impairing the accessibility, usability, or required visibility of the controls.

Adding to this accessibility, usability and required visibility of the controls 222 and 224, the surface on which they are displayed is inclined, and inclined both in plan and side

views. Such double inclination, by facing the controls 222 and 224 toward the user whose eyes and hands are generally disposed above and to the right side of the enclosure 20, helps in both the viewing and the use of the controls 222 and 224.

Two devices control the embodiment's operation. The first is a mechanical three hour count down timer 222. This windup timer 222 allows the embodiment to operate for up to three hours without having to reset the timer 222. An electronic digital can be substituted to perform the same function. Three hours is appropriate because a fifteen pound turkey takes about 12 minutes per pound to cook or about three hours in total. Thus three hours may accommodate such a large item without having excess time which might result in timer inaccuracies and loss of safety advantages. As an example, a four hour mechanical timer might have its time markings closer together on its dial and might have a mechanism which is inherently less accurate than a three hour timer. Both of these conditions would reduce the timing accuracy for the user. And safety might be reduced if the user could leave the embodiment for four, five, or six hours, instead of only three hours maximum.

The second control device is a control switch 224 which regulates the functions of the heat element 110, the gear reduced motor 212, and the light 98. The control switch 224 is only functional when the timer 222 is set and running with time on it. As shown in FIG. 5, the control switch 224 has three positions 252, 254 and 256. Starting from the left, the first position 252 called "No Heat Rotation" turns on the gear reduced motor 212, causing the spit assembly 170, if installed, to rotate, and turns off both the light 98 and the heat element 110. The light 98 being off, along with no light shining through the red lens 112, indicates to the user that the heating element 110 is off and is not receiving electricity. This first switch position 252 is generally used after foods have been rotisserie cooked to cool

the foods down while continuing the rotational flow of juices in and around the foods. It 252 keeps foods moist while not allowing grease, oil and/or other liquids to settle into the foods. It 252 may be used with the glass door 32 open 132, 134 and 87 or closed 85 depending on whether it is desirable to cool the foods to serving temperature rapidly or slowly. If the first switch position 252 is used with an electronic timer, the heat element 110 might be run at lower wattage or cycled on and off during this cooling down period to keep the foods warm for a prolonged period of time.

The second control switch position 254, titled "Normal Rotation", is used for rotisserie cooking. In this control switch position 254 the gear reduced motor 212, the heat element 110, and the light 98 all remain on. The light 98 being on, along with light shining through the red lens 112, indicates to the user that the heating element 110 is on and receiving electricity. In the second control switch position 254, foods are rotisserie cooked for the amount of time set on the timer 222.

The third control switch position 256, titled "Pause to Sear", is used to brown or sear the surfaces of foods. In this control switch position 256, the gear reduced motor 212 is turned off, thus stopping the spit assembly 170 from rotating, but the heat element 110, and the light 98 remain on. Using this switch position 256 involves rotating the food using either of the other two control switch positions 252 and 254 until the side of the food to be browned or seared faces the heating element 110, and then turning the control switch 224 to the "Pause to Sear" position 256. The food will brown or sear in this position 256 until the time set on the timer 222 expires.

Circuits to perform the functions described herein are well known to one knowledgeable in the art and thus are not described in this document.

Besides the countdown timer and control switch, the gear reduced motor is enclosed in the control/motor housing. Although many types of motors and gear transmissions might be suitable, a half inch stack shaded pole motor with spur and helical reduction has been found to produce particularly satisfactory results in the larger size embodiment whose dimensions have been described earlier

The smaller embodiment, whose dimensions were described earlier, might use a less powerful, and therefore less expensive motor, such as a gear reduced synchronous motor. Synchronous motors have an advantage in generally producing less noise than generally larger shaded pole motors and other motors commonly used in rotisseries. Use of the spit plate as an extra large and durable final drive gear allows use of synchronous motors which usually have less durable transmissions than those used on the more expensive shaded pole motors.

Several accessories can fit on the spit assembly. As an example as shown in FIGs. 16 and 17, a metal wire basket 270 might be fitted. This wire basket 270 might have a metal wire framework covered with a nonstick coating to prevent foods from sticking to the basket.

The lid 272 of the basket 270 is fitted with a fixed wire tab 274 on one side and a finger retractable wire tab 276 on the opposite side. Each tab fits into one of several slots 278 and 280 defined by wires on each side of the dished out lower part 282 of the basket 270. Thus the lid 272 may be adjusted to clamp onto and hold during rotisserie cooking several different thicknesses of foods.

There is a certain degree of springiness in the lid 272 and the lower part 282 of the basket 270, and this springiness allows the food 284 being held in the basket 270 to be clamped under pressure between the lid 272 and the lower part 282 of the basket 270 so that the food 284 is prevented from shifting while

cooking. The same springiness allows different thicknesses of food to be held securely at the same time. Helping this ability to accommodate different thickness food simultaneously, the fixed tab 274 and the finger retractable tab 276 may each be inserted at different heights above the floor 286 of the dished out lower part 282 of the basket 270.

Securing food in the basket 270 is a simple process. The food 284 is first placed on the floor 286 of the dished out lower part 282 of the basket 270. The fixed wire tab 274 on the lid 272 is slid into 283 one of the slots 278 on the side of the dished out lower part 282 of the basket 270. The slot 278 chosen, and hence the height of the lid 272 above the floor 286 adjacent to the fixed wire tab 274, should be slightly lower than the height of the food 284 directly adjacent to the slot 278.

The finger retractable wire tab 276 is then retracted 288 by squeezing on the movable 290 and fixed 292 handles of the finger retractable wire tab 276. The finger retractable wire tab 276 side of the lid 272 is then lowered 294 to clamp the food and the retractable wire tab 288 inserted into one of the slots 280 on the side of the dished out lower part 282 of the basket 270 by releasing finger pressure on the movable 290 and fixed 292 handles of the finger retractable wire tab 276.

Attaching the basket to the spit assembly 170 is done by simply inserting the two spit rods 176 and 178 through four integral semicircular loops 296 which are part of the dished out lower part 282 of the basket 270, and then placing the second spit plate 174 over the ends of the spit rods 176 and 178 and inserting the spit assembly 170 with the basket 270 in the normal manner into the cooking cavity 104.

The basket 270 is centered on the spit assembly 170 and fits between the two spit rods 176 and 178. This is different than most spit baskets which either have a spit rod running through their center or are placed off center to the spit assembly

rotation axis. Those baskets with a spit rod through their center limit their capacity to cook large flat foods such as steaks and fish. Those baskets which are placed off center to the spit rotation axis cook one side of the foods they contain more thoroughly than the other. By contrast, compared to these alternative designs, the basket of the preferred embodiment cooks food more evenly on both sides and has the ability to hold foods up to the full size of the basket. In the real world, both of these are major advantages in rotisserie cooking.

The fixed 274 and finger retractable tab 276 lid 272 attachment design of the preferred embodiment also has major advantages over other lid latching designs. As an example, many designs adjust to only one thickness of food. The preferred embodiment, through use of two tabs 274 and 276 which fit into separate slots 278 and 280 which individually adjust their heights, not only allows adjustment to different thickness foods, but allows several different thickness foods to be held in the basket 270 simultaneously.

Likewise, in contrast to lid attachment designs which are rigid, the preferred embodiment is springy which allows it not only adjust to different thickness foods being simultaneously held, but allows it also to put clamping pressure on the foods, even foods of different thicknesses, being held in the basket so they won't shift during rotisserie cooking. Shifting foods tend to get damaged and to fall out of the basket. Rigid basket designs generally don't provide this spring loaded clamping pressure.

The finger latching mechanism used on the preferred embodiment is also superior in simplicity and ease of use compared to other basket designs. As an example, the basket on the preferred embodiment may be secured closed with food in it using only one hand. Many other designs require two hands to close and latch.

Such baskets may be made in several different sizes. FIGs. 16 and 17 illustrate a relatively flat basket, perhaps as an example, one to one-and-a-half inches thick, which would be inserted with the spit assembly 170 in the low heat position 122 and hold such foods as steaks, fish and small vegetables. This basket's 270 perimeter is determined by the maximum size which will fit between the first 172 and second 174 spit plates and clear: the heat rods 110, the glass door 32, the cooking cavity ceiling 142, and grate cover 162.

A thicker basket, perhaps twice as thick as the previous basket 270 but otherwise similar in shape and dimensions to the previous basket, might be made to hold lobster tails, potatoes, and other larger vegetables and foods, as well as hold all the kinds of foods the previous basket 270 might hold.

Such a thick basket might also be made which would only extend out to the perimeters of the first 172 and second 174 spit plates. Such a basket might be used when it is mounted to the spit assembly 170 and the spit assembly 170 is supported in the high heat position 202, closer to the heat coil 110 where the reduced size would now allow the basket to clear. It would hold all the same foods the previous two described baskets could, but in smaller amounts. In return for these smaller amounts due to its restricted size, this basket would cook foods faster when it was placed in the high heat position. 202 This basket could also be used in the low heat position 122 if slower cooking speeds were desirable.

A thinner version of this high heat basket might also be made for use where food thickness was not a factor.

As illustrated in FIG. 13, another accessory which might be included with the preferred embodiment is the rotary cooking container 298 which stir fries and rotary cooks foods such as meats, vegetables, popcorn, shrimp, seafoods, etc.

This container can also be used with or without rotation but without heat inside the embodiment to marinate meats and vegetables by simply putting the meats or vegetables into the container 298 along with a marinade or rub and leaving the timer 222 in the off position or turning on the timer and placing the switch into the "No Heat Rotation" position. The rotary movement, if used, helps the marinade penetrate all sides of the meats or vegetables or helps the rubs coat all sides of the meats or vegetables with little or no intervention on the part of the user.

This accessory comprises a spit assembly 170 mounted cylindrical tubular housing 300 with at least one opening on one end, such opening 302 which may be covered by a lid or door when cooking. Several agitation blades 304 project from the interior surfaces of the cylindrical housing 300, and help move and direct food inside the housing 300 while the housing 300 is being rotated.

As shown in FIG. 13, in use, the cylindrical housing 300 is mounted onto the spit rods 176 and 178 through holes in the housing's ends 306 and 308.

A shape other than cylindrical may be used for the tubular housing 300 of the rotary cooking container 298. As examples, the tubular housing might be squaricle (cross between a square and a circle like an old television screen), square, pentagonal, hexagonal, irregular, or other shape in cross section.

To use this accessory 298, the user mounts the tubular housing 300 onto the spit rods 176 and 178, puts food and possibly cooking oil, spices, etc. inside the housing 300 through the hole 302 or holes 302 in the ends 306 and 308 of the housing 300, caps the housing 300 if a cap or door is to be used, and places the spit assembly 170, including the rotary cooking container 298 with its food contents, into the low 122 or high heat 202 spit mounting positions inside the enclosure 20.

The cooking process which follows this is like normal rotisserie cooking, except foods can be tumbled as they cook
5 inside the container, and if cooking oil is present, a form of stir frying may be performed.

The rotary cooking container 298 may be fabricated from stamped, rolled or cast metal, or from glass or from other appropriate materials well known in the art.

10 An alternative rotary cooking container 299 is shown in FIG. 13A. This container 299 requires no spit assembly 170 to operate, but instead incorporates integral stub axles 301 and 303 and an attached spit plate 305 with gear teeth 307 to support and rotate the container 299 inside the cooking cavity 104.
15 Agitators 309 inside the container 299 help move and tumble the food during cooking, application of rubs, marination.

A liquid tight door 311 covers an opening 313 in the side of the container 299 through which the container 299 may be loaded and unloaded. Steam and expanding and contracting gasses
20 are vented through a small vent hole 315 located adjacent to one of the integral stub axles 303.

This alternative rotary container 299 has large useable capacity because there are no spit rods running through its center. It also may be very easy to load and unload due to the
25 large opening 313 in its side. It also has the added advantage that no assembly is required, the container is complete and does not require a spit assembly 170 to be placed through its center to operate. And this container 299 may be used for all the same function of the rotary cooking container shown in FIG. 13.

30 Either the rotary cooking container shown in FIG. 13 or the one shown in FIG. 13A add a convenient cooking feature of automatically agitating foods without user intervention. When cooking, this means that foods tend not to burn and may be cooked with little or no oil or fats. Either rotary cooking container
35 may be nonstick coated on their interiors to help facilitate not

using fats and oils during cooking. Such coatings are well known in the art and thus are not described in detail herein.

5 Inserting and removing foods into and from the cooking cavity 104 of the preferred embodiment is typically an easy process. However, the preferred embodiment includes a pair of gloves 310 shown in FIG. 19 to simplify the process. These gloves 310 are different than normal kitchen gloves however.
10 Their 310 outer surfaces 312 are coated with a flexible, water and grease tight material, like plastic or rubber, similar to a set of dishwashing gloves. This water and grease tight material covers an insulating layer of cotton fabric less than 1/16 of an inch thick which helps prevent hot foods from burning the user.
15 The gloves 310 extend over the wrists and cover part of the user's lower arm.

A user may lift foods, such as chickens, turkeys, steaks, ribs or vegetables, which are either mounted or not mounted on the spit assembly, both into or out of the preferred embodiment's
20 cooking cavity 104, when the food is either hot or cold, using the gloves 310.

The gloves 310 prevent the user's hands from getting dirty or greasy and help protect the user from getting burned when handling hot foods.

25 The gloves 310 also simplify handling cooked and uncooked foods in general, and make easier the mounting and releasing foods to and from the spit assembly by removing concerns the user might have of getting dirty and greasy, and getting burned when directly using his or her hands to help perform these tasks. The
30 gloves 310 can also help protect the user from cuts which he might get using knives or other kitchen utensils, or from the spit rods 176 and 178 and other rotisseries parts and accessories.

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The gloves 310 are washable simply by placing them under running water and possibly using a little soap or detergent to help remove grease.

The gloves 310 are formed as normal four finger one thumb gloves, however they may also be formed as mitts with only one separation between thumb and finger enclosure areas, or they may have separations for every two or three fingers etc.

10 Unlike the gloves 310 that come with the preferred embodiment, conventional cooking gloves and mitts can not protect a user from hot grease, liquids and oils when directly handling rotisserie cooked foods, nor can such gloves and mitts be easily cleaned.

15 Also, unlike the gloves 310 that come with the preferred embodiment, conventional cooking gloves and mitts generally do not extend over the user's wrists and lower arms and thus do not provide protection against burns in these areas which approach hot cooking cavity walls while the user is reaching into the rotisserie cooking cavity to mount or unmount the spit assembly and for other reasons.

20 What has been described herein is merely a preferred embodiment of the present inventions. It is not intended to show all possible applications for the inventions nor should it to be deemed as limiting the scope of protection afforded to the present inventions. Such scope is defined by the claims appended hereto and their legally interpreted protection. Many variations may be made which exhibit the present inventions but do not literally duplicate all or parts of the embodiments described herein.

30 As examples: scale and proportions may be changed to provide increase capacity or more efficient use of available space; materials may be changed such as use of cast or stamped metals, or use of glass or thermoset or thermoform plastics to form the enclosure 20 or parts therein such as the spit plates 172 and 174

and drip pan 120 or other parts; other types of motors might be used such as PM dc motors, universal motors, inductance motors, 5 synchronous motors, etc.; pots, pans, fry pans etc. might be used for heating foods on top 24 of the enclosure 20 either to augment the warming/steaming tray unit 144 or in place of it; curved glass might be substituted for the single flat panel of glass 64 used in the inclined door 32; the control/motor housing 248 10 might be round, square or other shape in side view; the light 98 might be placed in other parts of the enclosure such as in the forward upper corner; electronics and possibly remote controlled electronics might be used to control the oven; bigger or smaller diameter spit plates 172 and 174 might be used to give more kabob 15 locations and better mechanical drive advantages or make handling of the spit assembly 170 easier; other types of handles 90 might be used on the door 32 such as a more conventional center handle or handles extending from the sides of the door 32, or a handle going the full width of the top of the door; materials other 20 than glass might be used for the door 32 such as plastic or metal.

Such changes are in the spirit of the present inventions which are limited by the claims herein and their legal interpretations.

25 An alternative embodiment of the present invention is shown in FIGs. 20-23. It consists essentially of oven cavity 500 having floor 502, left side wall 504, right side wall 506, back wall 508, front door 509 and roof 510. Spit assembly 512 is mounted with a horizontal axis within oven cavity 500.

30 Adjacent to back wall 508 and between back wall 508 and spit assembly 512, is heat coil 514 which is essentially a sideways "M" shaped electric heat coil mounted to right side wall 506.

Spit assembly 512 comprises first spit rod 516 and second spit rod 518 both rigidly mounted to first spit plate 520 and 35 each extending to second spit plate 522 where the spit rods are

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each engaged, first spit rod 516 into tubular cavity shaped
receptacle 524, and second spit rod 518 into tubular cavity
5 shaped receptacle 526.

As described above, spit assembly 512 slides into and mounts
to oven cavity 500. When spit assembly 512 is mounted inside
oven cavity 500, motor driven gear 528 engages spit plate 520 or
spit plate 522, depending on how spit assembly 512 is mounted.
10 That is, spit assembly 512 may be mounted with either spit plate
520 or spit plate 522 disposed adjacent to right side wall 506.

When motor driven gear 528 is then rotationally driven 530,
spit assembly 512 rotates 532, along with any food or food
holding utensils mounted to spit assembly 512, causing such food
15 to be cooked by being moved in front of heat coil 514.

A more detailed description of functions and construction
of this embodiment is provided above with respect to other
embodiments.

Drip tray 534 covered by perforated drip tray cover 536 is
20 disposed directly above floor 502 and underneath spit assembly
512. Four frustum conical feet, only two, 534 and 535, of which
are shown in FIG. 21, project from the bottom of drip tray 534.
Each frustum conical foot is mounted adjacent to a bottom corner
of drip tray 534.

25 Drip tray 534 is square and the four frustum conical feet
are also disposed in a square pattern allowing drip tray 534 to
be mounted with any of its four sides facing front door 509.
This is a convenience to the user because no special orientation
of drip tray 534 is needed prior to inserting drip tray 534 into
30 oven cavity 500. Any of four possible drip tray orientations
will work.

When drip tray 534 is inserted into oven cavity 500, its
four frustum conical feet, 534 and 535, rest into four detents,
only two, 538 and 540, are shown in FIG. 2, formed in floor 502.

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When door 509 is fully closed, see FIG. 21, it presses against forward facing edge 542 of drip tray 534 causing the four
5 frustum conical feet 534 and 535 to be pushed back and up, 544, and be partially lifted from the bottom of detents 538 and 540. This, through gravity, biases forward facing edge 543 against door 509.

During rotisserie cooking, grease and oil may collect on the
10 inside of door 509. With nothing to prevent it, this grease and oil, by gravity, might run down the inside of door 509 and drip onto the countertop supporting the embodiment. Forward facing edge 534 pressing against door 509 provides a barrier to help prevent grease and oil from reaching the bottom of door 509 and
15 thus reaching a supporting countertop.

Another form of preventing grease and oil from running down the inside of door 509 and onto a supporting countertop is provided by gutter 546 formed in the top of channel 548. Channel 548 secures axle 550 to the bottom of door 509. Axle 550 in turn
20 mounts and pivots door 509 to oven cavity 500.

Gutter 546, as shown in FIG. 21, is simply formed by bending the top of one leg of "U" shaped channel 548 outward along the entire width of channel 548. This also may be done to the top of both legs of "U" shaped channel 548 to make door 509
25 symmetrical and able to be mounted with either of its faces disposed outward. This again would be a convenience to the user because no special orientation of door 509 would be necessary prior to mounting door 509 to oven cavity 500.

Channel 548 covers the bottom of door 509 and obscures the
30 forward edge of floor 502 when door 509 is closed. Door 509 is essentially a single pane of tempered glass. Opaque printed frame 552 is printed onto the left, right and top periphery of this pane of glass. When door 509 is closed, frame 552 helps obscure viewing of the front edges of roof 510 and side walls 504
35 and 506. Over time, these front edges may become dirty or

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stained. Opaque printed frame 552 helps cosmetically hide such imperfections. Opaque printed frame 552 cost virtually nothing to manufacture because it is added simultaneous to the printing of logo 554 onto door 509. Warning 556 may be dropped out of opaque printed frame 552, that is, it may be printed in negative with no ink voids forming the letters of warning 556.

Opaque printed frame 552 may be printed in the same color as the outside of side walls 504 and 506 and the outside of roof 510, making warning 556 virtually invisible when door 509 is closed. Warning 556 may be printed upside down and mirror imaged so it is both visible and readable when door 509 is open.

Rotisseries, and in particular rotisserie ovens, have a problem in that when food is mounted on their spits, it may not be possible, or it may be very difficult, to see whether the food is touching the side walls, heat coils, roofs, floors, or other parts of the rotisserie. This in turn may create a safety hazard by causing undetected collisions which may stop rotation of the spit or cause burning of the food.

The embodiment mounts spit assembly 512 asymmetrically within oven cavity 500 biasing the axis forward of center. That is, the spit assembly is mounted closer to door 509 than to heat coil 514 or any other objects on the inside of oven cavity 500. This means that door 509 will be hit by any oversize or mismounted food or other objects attached to spit assembly 512 before the food will hit heat coil 514 or any other objects inside oven cavity 500. This in turn causes the user to see and hear the food hitting door 509, warning the user of potential danger before it occurs. In the case of the embodiment, door 509 is partially pushed open if food or other objects are too large to safely fit into the embodiment or are mismounted. Pushing door 509 open and closed provides further visual and auditory indications to the user of food being too large or improperly mounted.

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Dotted line 558 in FIG. 21 traces the path of the outer perimeter of a marginally too large piece of food and shows how it pushed door 509 outward through dotted line trace 560 of door 509.

Rotisseries in general have a problem in that when they are done cooking, people are not always ready to eat, or it is not convenient or possible for users to be there to remove and serve the food cooked. A timer, such as electronic timer 562 controlled by free rotating jog knob 564, may solve part of this problem by turning off cooking heat at the end of a preset time and making an alert sound. However, depending on when a user returns, food may be cold and not optimal for serving or eating.

15 The embodiment offers a warming feature which turns off cooking heat, but maintains spit rotation and warming heat for a preset time at the end of the cooking period.

To accomplish this, the user, before or after setting the cooking time, or during the cooking period, pushes "Keep Warm" button 566. By default 1:00, one hour, flashes on display 568 for five seconds indicating that the keep warm feature will be on for one hour after the cooking period is completed. During the five seconds the one hour indication is flashing, the user may rotate knob 564 and change the flashing time to whatever new warming time is desired. This warming time may have limitations of, for example, 9 hours, for safety reasons.

Light 570 above "Keep Warm" button 566, indicates whether the feature has been activated. Pushing button 566 any time light 570 is on, again flashes display 568 for 5 seconds and gives the user another chance to both view and change the warming time. Pressing button 566 a second time within two minutes turns off the warming feature, as does adjusting the warming time to zero using knob 564. However, if button is pressed yet a third time within 2 minutes, it will again flash for 5 seconds with the preset warming time.

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If button 566 is pressed prior to setting the cooking time, light 570 will remain on, and the warming feature time will be remembered for up to 2 minutes waiting for the cooking time to be entered. After that time, if the cooking time is not set during that time, the warming feature is turned off and everything resets.

The warming feature works by cycling the electricity going to heat coil 514 on and off. A cycle time between 1/60 second to 40 seconds has been found to work properly with a duty cycle of between 5% and 60% on. Both the cycle time and the duty cycle may be preset in the electronics and thus not be user controlled. Other forms of lowering heat, such as: lowering current, cutting the voltage sign wave, mechanically blocking or venting heat, may also be used to achieve food warming heat. Electronics and mechanics to accomplish all the above features are within practice of those with common knowledgeable of the art and thus are not detailed herein.

Rotisseries have had problems in the past with the inconvenience of setting cooking times and conditions. This takes several forms. First, cooking temperatures are sometimes variable, either because of the heat source, such as charcoal, or because the temperature itself may be set by the user. Cooking times are often difficult to calculate, because they vary with the amount of heat and the type of food being cooked and because they also vary with the weight of food being cooked.

Usually the user must find a cookbook, look up the cooking temperature and cooking time for the food being cooked, and calculate the overall cooking time using the food's weight.

The embodiment has simplified this process in several ways. First, it has no cooking temperature setting. Instead it runs heat coil 514 constantly on during the entire cooking period. This greatly simplifies the heat coil controls which in turn reduces manufacturing costs and complexity, and inherently

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increases device operating reliability. Cooking temperature is set by an equilibrium between oven cavity 500 venting and radiant and conduction heating supplied by heat coil 514's constant on condition.

Having constantly on heat also minimizes cooking time by having the heat coil radiate heat continuously during the cooking period verses having the heat coil turn on and off its radiant energy in response to thermostatic control. Radiant energy, as opposed to cooking with hot air alone, is one of the secrets behind good and fast rotisserie cooking. Tests performed by the inventors herein have shown, having a constant source of radiant heat during the cooking period increases food quality and reduces cooking times.

The next way the embodiment simplifies setting up to cook food is by printing cooking times 572 for various types of food directly on the outside of oven cavity 500 and printing them adjacent to controls 568 and 564. This means that a user doesn't need to find a cookbook to look up how many cooking minutes are needed per pound to cook a chicken.

Cooking chart 574 printed on the side of control box 576 carries this to the next level by having a grid chart with food weights in its left most column and cooking times for each weight arranged under columns headed at their tops by food types in columns to the right of the weight column. FIG. 22 shows a detail of chart 574. By being printed on the sides of control box 576, chart 574 eliminates a need for a user to find a cookbook. And by having a precalculated grid, chart 574 eliminates having to calculate cooking times based on multiplication of per weight unit cooking times by food weights.

Thus instead of finding a cookbook, looking up the food being cooked, calculating the cooking time, setting the cooking time and setting the cooking temperature, the user simply looks

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at the side of the preferred embodiment and sets the cooking time two steps instead of five.

5 Controls on the embodiment are simple and intuitive to use. Setting cooking times using a knob is familiar to virtually everyone. Rotating knob 564 clockwise immediately turns on the embodiment for normal rotisserie cooking and adjusts the cooking time which is displayed in display 568. Rotating knob 564
10 rapidly increments or decrements display 568 more minutes per degree of knob turning than rotating knob 564 slowly. As an example, rotating knob 564 ninety degrees clockwise rapidly might increase the cooking time by 20 minutes, whereas rotating knob 564 the same number of degrees in the same direction slowly might
15 only increase the cooking time by 6 minutes. This allows both quick and accurate adjustment of cooking times.

Tactile bumpiness in the rotation of knob 564 as well as an audible beep for each minute incremented or decremented also helps make knob 564 use easier. When knob 564 is rotated slowly,
20 there is one bump in the tactile bumpiness and one beep for each minute incremented or decremented.

Button 578 controls: whether both heat coil 514 is activated and spit assembly 512 is rotating, or whether only heat coil 514 is activated with no spit rotation, or if only spit assembly 512
25 is rotating without heat. Three lights 580 indicate which condition is selected through the sequential pressing of button 578. If button 578 is pressed before the cooking time is set, its setting is indicated by lights 580 and remembered for two minutes during which time the embodiment may be turned on by
30 setting the cooking time using knob 564. If no cooking time is set during the two minutes, the embodiment resets. Audible beeps accompany all button pushes on the embodiment, and help make control settings more positive and predictable. Audible beeps also occur when any settings automatically change, such as when
35 the embodiment turns itself off after the cooking period, or the

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embodiment automatically times out when button 578 is pressed and no cooking time is set in the following two minutes.

5 Button 578 allows foods, such as steaks or hamburgers, to be seared on one side by activating heat without spit assembly rotation. Button 578, also allows foods to cool down without juices settling by rotating the food after cooking without using heat. Button may set any of its conditions for other purposes
10 as well.

"Off" button 582 turns off the embodiment totally. Pushing button 582 when the embodiment is off causes spit assembly 512 to rotate while button 582 is being pushed. This feature allows spit assembly 512 to be rotated to tie or untie foods, to apply
15 sauces or rubs, to sear foods, to rotate food to right side up for removal, or for other purposes.

First spit rod 516 and second spit rod 518 mount to first spit plate 520 by seating inside tubular receptacle members 588 and 590 respectively. Receptacle members 588 and 590 are rigidly
20 secured to first spit plate 520 by rivet-like forging or their backs. First spit rod 516 and second spit rod 518 are respectively secured within first receptacle member 588 and second receptacle 590 by first set screw 584 and second set screw 586 respectively. These set screws each have finger flats on
25 their heads which allow them to be hand tightened and loosened. Annular grooves, one near the end of each spit rod, help seat and secure set screws 584 and 586 into the spit rods and thus help to secure the spit rods in place.

Loosening set screws 584 and 586 allows spit rods 516 and
30 518 to be removed from first spit plate 520. This may be convenient for storage, shipping or other purposes. Being able to do this by hand, without use of tools may make achieving this convenience even easier than if tools were required.

As shown in FIG. 20, set screws 584 and 586 are disposed
35 with their shafts paralleling each other and coming out the

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respective sides of receptacle members 588 and 590. This side positioning helps lower the possibility of spit rods 516 and 518 becoming unparallel due to torque while spit assembly 512 is being driven by motor driven gear 528. The side positioning also makes turning the finger grips easier by positioning the grips within the frustum conical hollow in first spit plate 520.

On the opposite ends from where they are mounted into receptacle members 588 and 590, first spit rod 516 and second spit rod 518 mount to second spit plate 522 by sliding into tubular cavity shaped receptacles 524 and 526. As shown in FIG. 23, receptacles 524 and 526 have conical lead-ins 600 and 602 capped on their outer perimeters by annular vertical walls 592 and 594. When spit assembly 512 is being assembled, walls 592 and 594 help catch pointed ends 596 and 598 of spit rods 516 and 518 respectively and, along with conical lead-ins 600 and 602, help guide pointed ends 596 and 598 into tubular cavity shaped receptacles 524 and 526. This makes assembling of spit assembly 512 much easier.

Although many methods may be used to fabricate receptacles 524 and 526 a combination of machining and forging has been found to produce favorable results and minimize binding between spit rods 516 and 518 and receptacles 524 and 526 during assembly and disassembly of spit assembly 512. In the manufacturing process, receptacles 524 and 526 are first turned on a screw machine and then they are placed in a press where a finer finish is achieved, particularly within receptacle holes 604 and 606, by forging receptacles 524 and 526 against dies.

The foregoing describes embodiments utilizing the present inventions. Many variations of, and modifications to, these embodiments will be obvious to those knowledgeable in the art. As examples: these embodiments can be made at any scale, embodiments can be made with stands so they don't need a counter to rest on, more than two spit rods might be used, as an example

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3 spit rods might be employed or a single spit rod might be
substituted for the dual rod design shown, spit rods might be
5 square, hexagonal, triangular or other shape in cross section,
spit rods might each on their own hold food rather than only
holding food or utensils in cooperation with one another, spit
assembly 512 might be directly rotationally driven through its
axle rather than through a gear linked to its spit plate, door
10 509 might cover only a portion of the front of oven cavity 500,
door 509 might extend partially or totally where roof 510 is, the
shape of oven cavity 500 might be cylindrical or might be
rectangular, or circular or elliptical or other shape in forward
and/or sideways cross section, etc. Such changes, variation and
15 modifications would be obvious to those knowledgeable in the art.
Hence the legal coverage afforded this patent shall be limited
only by the appended allowed claims and their legal equivalents.

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